

Small-scale grants for debunking and fact-checking articles exposing Kremlin disinformation and propaganda in Southeast Europe

The Kremlin has significantly intensified its online disinformation and propaganda campaigns over the last decade, targeting audiences in Russia, its neighbouring countries, and Europe as a whole. This trend coincides with and has been reinforced by a sharp rise in domestic extremism and populism, as well as by the activities of opaque networks of private economic and political interests and outdated security services throughout Southeast Europe. Russia's unprovoked military aggression against Ukraine, the subsequent economic and political sanctions against the Kremlin, and its response of weaponizing its energy exports to Europe as a tool for geopolitical influence, have further exacerbated this information warfare.

At this critical juncture, independent fact-checkers' ability to debunk falsehoods must be strengthened to ensure continuous and fact-based analysis of the Kremlin's disinformation and propaganda narratives that have been proliferated across traditional and social media in a blatant attempt to influence public opinion and national decision-making.

In response to this need, the [FENCE](#) initiative, supported by the [European Digital Media Observatory](#) (EDMO), **offers small-scale grants to boost fact-checking and debunking activities in Southeast Europe**, with a special focus on Bulgaria, Greece, and Romania. The initiative's aim is to reveal the Kremlin's disinformation and propaganda narratives being spread across the region, and in particular those used by domestic actors in national political debates and election campaigns.

What we offer:

- **200 EUR grant per single debunking and/or fact-checking article**, which can provide evidence of false or misleading statements and positions related to pro-Kremlin disinformation and propaganda narratives. Articles exposing disinformation narratives used in domestic political debates and supported by domestic actors are particularly encouraged.
- **Inclusion of submitted debunking and/or fact-checking articles in the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO) repositories** and the FENCE web-site. Articles will also be disseminated through the FENCE network of contacts in SEE.
- The articles may also be published on the author's webpage and disseminated to any contacts, but **must comply with visualization requirements** as described below.

What we are looking for:

- Debunking and/or fact-checking articles produced particularly for the current call, that have **never been published before** in any form and any language;
- Articles could be **either only in English or in the local language of any SEE country with translation in English**;
- There is no size limit for the articles, but a **minimum size of 2 standard pages** (1800 characters with spaces per page) would be considered as appropriate.
- The article **must include**:
 - Title
 - Author's name (if it is published on behalf of an organisation, it could indicate only the organisation name)
 - Organisation name (if appropriate)
 - Date of being produced
 - Short summary (1-3 sentences; could be also in bullet-style)
 - Full-text body of the article with supporting links, images, etc.
 - (optional) Links to author's or organisation's web-site
 - (optional) Logo of the organization (in high-resolution, suitable for publication online)
 - Visualization requirements: when published online or offline, incl. on the author's / organisation's web-site or when disseminated by any other means, the article must include the FENCE logo and the following disclaimer: "This publication has been funded by the European Union under the project FENCE *"Building resilience for safeguarding political debates in EU Southeast frontiers"*, Agreement number LC-01682257. The publication reflects the views only of the author and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use, which may be made of the information contained therein." The FENCE logo will be provided when needed.

Format of the article:

- **Claim made in the debunked or fact-checked article.** Make clear that this section is a short summary of the misleading or false information. Focus on the main narrative or core message in the article to avoid having the recipients develop a familiarity with the misleading claims.
- **Assessment of the claim.** Use simple language and simple argumentation to refute the main claim. This makes the readers more likely to accept the debunking. Use positive language to support their acceptance. Do not try to refute several complicated claims. Assess the article, for example, as an "unsubstantiated claim" when the original article includes insufficient sources or claims causalities where only correlation exists; "missing or wrong context" when information is omitted, generalised or outdated; "manipulated" when documents, films, pictures, or quotes are manipulated to change their meaning, or as a "fictitious claim".
- **Facts to substantiate the assessment.** Be transparent about your sources. They should be credible, public, and neutral sources. Trace back and contextualise claims made in the debunked or fact-checked article. Offer the readers an alternative explanation of the refuted disinformation.

Eligible applicants:

- Individual experts or organisations, located in any of the SEE countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, and Turkey). Persons and organisations from Bulgaria, Greece, and Romania are particularly encouraged to apply.
- Each applicant can apply for a submission of a single or several articles, following the procedure described below.

Application procedure:

- Each applicant must send a request for submission using the template below to the following e-mail address: fence-call@csd.bg. The applicant will be notified if the submission is accepted within 24 hours.
- Full-text debunking or fact-checking article(s) following accepted submissions should be sent to the following e-mail address: fence-call@csd.bg, incl. all supporting materials e.g. images, logos, etc., no later than 10 working days after the submission approval.
- Each full-text article will be reviewed by the FENCE team and, if approved, will be published on the FENCE website no later than 2 working days after it was received.
- After the publication on the FENCE website, the article will be included also in EDMO repositories.
- Only finally approved full-text articles that are published on the FENCE website, will be eligible for the grant of 200 EUR per article.
- The submissions will be evaluated and approved a “first come, first served” basis.

Template for “Request for submission” of debunking / fact checking article

(available also in Microsoft Word DOCX format)

(if needed, duplicate the table below)

Title of the article	
Full name of the author	
Organisation name (if appropriate)	
Link(s) to author'/organisation's web-site (if available)	
Summary of the article (1-3 sentences; could be also in bullet-style, explaining the main disinformation narratives that will be debunked)	
(Optional) Link(s) to previous debunking or fact-checking articles by the same author / organisation	